

Crazy Zoom calls, long Starbucks orders, and an excentric game show host sound like the contents of a dream when grouped together, but Loudoun Valley High School made this conglomerate a dream to watch. The players took a typical Zoom call and turned it into a profound metaphor in a matter of minutes with their performance of *Unstable Connections*.

For a collection of different student devised scenes, the plot of *Unstable Connections* was impressively coherent and engaging. The play started out with a group of people who were sent to “Zoom purgatory” after they died. The moderator puts their morality to the test before they can find their eternal resting place. Though this concept seemed overwhelming at first, its captivating characters and thoughtful storytelling proved that every moment was intentional.

The cast and crew had a knack for writing hilarious, relevant anecdotes from a discussion of everyone’s go-to order that ranged from Starbucks to a joke about how if Zoom is hell then Skype is heaven. Not only were these choices creative, but they aided in the characterization of every individual character and their attitudes. Every character had their own voice, and you could tell each actor had a part in writing their own dialogue.

Two characters that stood out from the start were #2 (Francesca Fiorello) and #3 (Keira Anderson). Their contrasting attitudes made for many interesting moments throughout the play. #2 used powerful reactions and facial expressions to define her character as the angsty friend. #2’s anger towards #3 about the car accident that killed them both was comical because of how well #3 played the peaceful, carefree hippie archetype. This performance by #3 countered #2’s performance and created the perfect feud for conflicts to stem from.

Janus (Chloe Anderson), the hilarious host of “Wheel of Choices,” took on the arduous task of keeping the energy up amid this chaotic Zoom call. She met this challenge head-on. Her infectious energy strongly juxtaposed the attitudes of the aforementioned cast members, notably with her drawn out line, “come on down.”

The show started strong with a showcase of art portraying all the ways characters in the Zoom purgatory died (Lilly Swann, Kenny Bills, V. Cam Reyes). These images provide a unique setup to the plotline, underscored by an impressive student-composed musical arrangement (Des Sequeira). The editing team (Des Sequeira, James Laybourne, Trevor Nyberg, Dylan Steigerwald, Angel Vasquez) on this production embraced the virtual format of Zoom and included chat pop-ups and bleeped out curse words which provided a unique experience that would not have been possible in live theatre.

Within this environment of virtual everything, another Zoom call seems like a bore. But the cast and crew of *Unstable Connections* proved that being online does not have to be a disadvantage. Maybe Zoom (or Skype) is the place to be after all?